

The Rev Père Duval, C. S. C
St Basil, Macdowaska N.B.

CHATHAM, N. B., Feast of the Epiphany,
January 6th, 1874.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR :

Herewith I send you a copy of the Joint Pastoral Letter of the venerable Metropolitan and all the suffragan Bishops of our Ecclesiastical Province, recently assembled at Halifax, addressed to their flocks, respecting the strict obligation of conscience devolving on Catholics, (as on all Christians,) to prevent as far as they are able the public impiety of excluding by law religious teaching and influences from the education of youth.

This Pastoral Letter, written by the Archbishop himself and signed by all the other Bishops of the Province, reiterates the only doctrine on this subject which it is possible for any intelligent Catholic to hold, and which has been invariably proclaimed as occasion required at each period of the discussion of this education question in these Maritime Provinces during the last twenty years. It is therefore a dignified answer contradicting the statement made in the New Brunswick Parliament and elsewhere that the Archbishop approved of this Godless school law in Nova Scotia. That such a statement is utterly incorrect is manifest from the following facts :

1st. It is a well-known public fact how strenuously the Archbishop, Bishops, Clergy and Laity, comprising the Catholic people of Nova Scotia opposed for years the Godless School Law.

2nd. At a meeting of the Catholic Bishops of our Ecclesiastical Province held at Pictou on the occasion of dedicating the new Catholic Church of that town in October, 1866, the Archbishop was deputed by all the Bishops to proceed to London, which he did, for the purpose of obtaining, if possible, from the Canadian Delegates and the Members of the British Government, then engaged in framing the British North American Act, that the principle of the Quebec School Law, which gives justice to the minorities, be extended by the provisions of that Act to the whole Dominion. The Archbishop's proposal was favorably received, and he was encouraged for a long time to believe that he had attained the end of his mission. But it was thought that this could be done only by transferring the question of education from the Local Legislatures to that of the General Parliament of the Dominion; and to this the two Delegates from the Province of Quebec objected, invoking the diplomatic aid of the French Government to maintain the French Canadians in all the rights and privileges guaranteed to them at the capitulation of Quebec and confirmed by subsequent treaty between France and England. This abruptly terminated all further consideration of the subject for the time, which greatly disappointed the Archbishop. Yet he could not and did not blame any one. The gentlemen representing Quebec acted in the interest of their Province. He could not but feel grateful to all the others for their favorable consideration of his proposals. Had they been carried into effect all the agitation which has since taken place in New Brunswick and the Dominion on this school question would have been prevented.

3rd. It is also a patent fact that the Nova Scotia School Law which had been enacted—though much less objectionable in itself and on account of another existing law ensuring a generous allocation of the public funds to support the two Catholic Colleges at Halifax and Antigonish—could never have been forced into general operation against the united conscientious opposition of the Catholic Bishops, Clergy and Laity until the Government administering the Law had made such modifications as greatly tranquilized, if they did not entirely satisfy, the Catholic conscience. It was not the text of the law itself, but this favorable mode of practically administering it, which virtually allowed to Catholics their own Schools, Religious Teachers and Reading Books, though under Government inspection, which met the Archbishop's approval.

As our just rights have been so tyrannically trampled on by the present Government, our reasonable demands misstated or misrepresented by their public organs, and as various Members of Parliament have so criminally violated their duty and their pledges made to their Catholic constituents in their canvass and at other times in respect of this School Law, it becomes the duty of Catholic electors to carefully discriminate in all future elections so as not to vote for any one who has already abused their confidence, or whose reputation for public honesty, veracity and faithful adhesion to just principle is not such as to merit their support. Catholics cannot abandon the *right*, as they can never shirk the *obligation* imposed on them by the highest laws, natural and revealed, of educating their children in the fear and love of God, which cannot be done, if religion be excluded from the general system of education.

Begging of that Divine Infant, whose miraculous Star shone to enlighten the kings and wise men who came to adore Him, that He may shed a ray of His divine light on our Statesmen and save the little ones of our flocks from the worse than Herodian persecution, which seeks to separate them from the knowledge and love of Jesus!

I remain, Revd. and Dear Sir,

Very faithfully yours in J. C.

† **JAMES ROGERS,**

Bishop of Chatham.

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